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EX-892-Rad 1.9
EXTENSION WORK ADAPTED TO MEET CHANGING CONDITIONS.

1934
A radio talk by C. B. Smith, Extension Service, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, May 16, 1934.

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Agricultural Extension Work was organized for the purpose of increasing farm efficiency, farm income, rural home making, and developing a fine rural life. The think that distinguishes modern agricultural extension work from all earlier extension work in the United States is the corps of technically-trained men and women who live among the rural people they serve and demonstrate the better way on the farmer's own farm. There are about 3,000 county agricultural agents and assistant agents, 1,300 home demonstration agents, and 250 boys' and girls' county 4-H club agents putting on this demonstration work. Some 300 of these county and home demonstration agents are colored and serve the rural negro population.

The technically-trained men and women agents thus located by government in counties are general organizers, advisors, and counselors to farm men, farm women, and rural youth. When the county agents have problems too difficult for them to handle, they have back of them about 1,200 specialists, both men and women, located at the State colleges of agriculture, upon whom they may call for technical help in advising with rural men and women. Back of these 1,200 specialists are the 5,000 research workers of the State agricultural experiment stations and the 5,000 more research workers of the Federal Department of Agriculture. Added to all these are the 6,000,000 farm men and women who are likewise experimentors, constantly trying out new crops, new ways, new combinations, and finding out new knowledge of significance in agriculture and rural life.

The Extension staff constitutes the agency that gathers together all these new facts, new ways, new knowledge, and, working with farm men and farm women who know local conditions, fits the new knowledge to the conditions and needs of every farm and every rural home that desires to keep pace with modern progress.

The genius of Agricultural Extension is that its 6,000 trained workers deal with facts. Before advising, they first inquire as to the facts in the case. What is the situation? What are the needs? What can be done about it? How best go about meeting the situation? That is the formula -- tradition, superstition, opinion, guesswork give way in each case to the finding of the facts, analyzing the facts, and then basing the program on the facts.

Back in 1914, when Cooperative Extension Work was established, the big national need was efficiency in production and increased farm income, and that was then the objective of extension. With the coming of the World War, increased food supplies were needed. Extension forces were on the ground to stimulate farmers to increase production and show them how to do it. Extension agents were likewise on the ground to aid the Government in the farmer war draft problem, the location of horses and mules for the Army, the distribution of nitrate of soda for the Government in its increased production plans. They acted as 4-minute men in explaining to rural groups, the nation's

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war program and needs. When drought struck the Southwest and threatened the starvation of millions of cattle, the Extension agents in drought areas helped transfer the cattle to other areas of the country where feed was more abundant. When floods devastated parts of the lower Mississippi Valley, the extension agents were on the job to cooperate with relief agencies in rehabilitating stranded families and getting them started again in farming and home building. When hurricanes visited portions of Florida and thousands of rural families were homeless, extension forces were first on the job to help get them on their feet again with seed, feed, and fertilizer. When drought and grasshoppers visited the Northwest and devastated crops, the extension agents were there to organize the farmers of their counties to meet the situation.

Whatever the need of rural people anywhere, that is the concern of extension agents, who adapt their program to meet that need. When the Federal agricultural adjustment law was enacted to bring farm prices to parity, the new administration found extension agents in nearly every rural county in the United States available, ready and competent to explain the new acts and advise farmers as to how they might take advantage of the act and secure its benefit payments. When new laws were enacted, providing additional Federal credit to farmers, the extension agents were on the job again to explain the changes and help farmers in their refinancing efforts. When the depression came and hundreds of thousands of families were placed on relief, extension agents were found helping with gardens, the canning of surplus meats and vegetables, counsel as to cheap but adequate diets, and the maintenance of morale through increased recreation, social life, emergency jobs, handicraft work, and like matters.

Yes, extension meets the changes of the times, because its program is based on the needs as they arise, as well as on future outlook. It constitutes a great ever ready preparedness measure that serves the nation in times of either peace or war,- a mobile, trained, competent force of men and women, cooperating each year with three million farm men and women in meeting conditions as they arise and looking forward toward the sunrise.

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